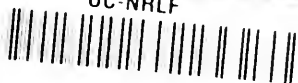


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THE BOOK OF NATURE



THE
BOOK OF NATURE

1910-1912

BY
JOHN GOULD FLETCHER

THE
BOOK OF NATURE
1910-1912

LONDON
CONSTABLE AND COMPANY LTD
1913

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(15)

TO

M. F. AND A. F. T.

I FED my soul on vast green towering trees
Beneath which roses made eternal June,
And, lured by drowsy song of drunken bees,
I fell asleep and spent long years aswoon.

Then from wild peaks, wine-red in day's decline,
I drank ; and still the acrid taste remains
Of all that ever-flowing endless line
Of scanty, sun-parched, aromatic plains.

I clad myself in all the shimmering veils
Of sound which breezes weave in upland pines :
Or the harsh clash of waves which, sped by gales,
Upon a flat shore crash in foaming lines.

I warmed myself before the terrible fires
Of life, which roar in many a city vast :
Before all pains and joys of man's desires,
His dubious future and his tragic past.

And then I roused myself in stubborn will :
And, fenced with pride which baffles woe and wrong,
I fashioned images joyous, terrible,
And sent them forth to walk on feet of song.

They come to where, beneath the green trees' shade,
Bloom roses of June, dream-passionate and sweet.
From other songs and worlds all unafraid
They come, to kneel as slaves before your feet.

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PART I
THE MONTHS IN ITALY

JANUARY : THE COMING OF THE SNOW

THE long thin swaying curtains of the rain
Are tangled in the bare boughs of the plain.

Down-sloping from the sky, grey-mottled o'er,
Their fringes trail the sodden valley floor.

Heavy with woe, they dusk the day's grey light ;
Heavy, they stir and rustle all the night :

And the steep crumbling bridge that leads to town
Quivers beneath the torrent rushing down.

Some mystery is now shaping 'neath these veils ;
Which none may see, till, rent by northern gales,

They suddenly fly apart : then, 'yond them, lo !
The high, untrodden peaks of sparkling snow !

FEBRUARY : THE WINTER PEACE

THE great trees lift unbending stems
From out the hard, dry, stiffly-frozen ground :
Upon their brows brown winter diadems
Of withered leaves are bound.

They stand where the bare upland ends
Into a pale sky smooth and clear,
And guard, like a bronze-hammered fence,
The great gap over there.

Beyond, as faded tapestry
Within a cool and empty room,
A vast blue valley floor I see
Rise to its mountain home.

The white-walled towns outspread below
Within the blue depths palely shine :—
Above, the peaks, like wraiths of snow,
Rest in an endless line.

Beyond the uplands safely passed,
Beyond the slopes, beyond the trees,
Upon the valley floor at last
There dwells the winter's peace.

FEBRUARY: THE WINTER PEACE 5

Poised between past and what is new,
The great world sleeps, nor dreams of spring ;
Wrapt in its robe of white and blue,
The winter's blossoming.

Now life throbs faint unconscious bliss,
Suspended pain, suspended breath—
A void of timeless time it is,
The winter's death.

MARCH: THE MONTH OF STORMS

I FLED from blustering March
To where the heavens arch
 With blue of summer day :
 March caught me on the way.
Sudden he blew his horn ;
Straight was the sky upturn :
 Northward he shook his locks,
 Southward he smote the rocks ;
Sped by in pelting sleet,
With winds were shod his feet,
 A cloud his charioteer
 Over the shivering mere . . .

O could I be a wind on a March day,
 Filled with pure joy of an unconscious being,
 I would arise and hasten onward, seeing
Whereto the month of storms hurries away.

APRIL : THE BLOSSOMING

To the bees' resounding hum
 Lo, they come !
First, upon the bare hillside
Rosy spikes, the almond's pride ;
 Piercing with empurpled glow
 Windswept dark-blue skies that show
 Far-off faint peaks white with snow :
Next the cherry from which song
Shakes the white shower all day long,
 Ringing to stir the sluggish growth
 Of a thousand others bursting forth
On the glowing green hillside,
Which becomes a mosaic pied,
 A vast galaxy of hues
 Whose perfume breezes catch and lose.
Later, peach pours forth her breath :
Dandelions powder the grass beneath.
 Day 's too short to count each head
 Green or golden, blue or red :
'Mid the life-flushed rout I see
Asphodels that sway in glee,
Spring's mad immortality !

MAY : THE COMING OF SUMMER

THE flowers have fallen in fickle showers :
And festival green has crept unseen
Over the valley and hill.
Birds speed with rhythm the rollicking hours,
But where is the grave, the grave of my flowers ?
Ask of the rippling grass-grown slopes
Where, one by one, like accomplished hopes,
Flaunt flame-coloured sun-worshipping poppies
That in the wind are never still.

June and July are already with us !
See, too, the swallow that, amorous,
Rises and scuds continually
Across the sky like a sail on the sea.
The gorgeous pageant of tragedy
Opens, in regal panoply !

O for the wild unconquerable rhythms
Of summer ; the grass and the trees,
The booming chorus of bees,
The solos of echoing birds !
O for a flight like the woodlings—
Centaurs and Fauns, Hamadryades,

MAY : THE COMING OF SUMMER 9

Galloping on to where Orpheus sings :
O for the ships straining weary wings
 Far upon motionless, unreal seas,
 And the blazing and drunken hours of ease :
Like the flushed stir of painful passion
 In the poppy-petals under the sun,
 And the long sleep when passion is done,
When the petals droop, and are folded each one,
 And toil is done, and the dream begun.

JUNE: HYMN TO THE SUN

I

SUN that created me,
Sun that maintains me,
Sun that shall destroy me,
Glory and honour to thee, O Sun.

Sun from whose empty white unity
Are scattered abroad the infinite colours ;
Even as all human deeds, thoughts, passions,
Unite to dissolve in thee every instant :

That makest the grass ripe for the mower,
The fruit ready to fall from the tree ;
That guidest for ever time's leaping shuttle
Through the same warp for myriads of years.

I, blazing particle of thy sea of fire,
Ray of thy light, spark of the furnace undying,
Part of the all, cry too, victorious, an instant,
Glory and honour to thee, O Sun.

II

Not as in grey northern regions,
Where sad sickly men put life itself to the question,
Would I live, but in uttermost power :
Borne up, overwhelmed by thee !

Thou must vanish from me in the passionate
sacrifice
Of thy life for my sake, and for all men about me :
Thou must rise once again to conquer and slay us,
And repeat the cycle unchanging.

I know that no more than the silent grass which
the mower
Reaps, can I stand in the years which are to come :
But that grass too will newly spring on the same
spot,
As I, perhaps, shall return through thee, O sun !

Sun that created me,
Sun that maintains me,
Sun that shall destroy me,
Glory and honour to thee, O Sun.

INTERLUDE : THE STORM

THUNDER : through the wide arches of the south
The grey storm-stallions now confused mix,
Tossing their manes with screams and bites and
kicks,
While lightning drips like foam from every mouth.

Bullets of hail meet javelins of rain
Along the black entrenchments of the sky,
The torrent tugs, too, at its boulder chain,
Growling in horrible fury to be free.

Now 'mid the charges and the cannonade,
Tosses the wind like a vast flag unfurled
'Mid battle-song of wrack and havoc made,
Change and destruction cast upon the world :
Where man, with trembling body, shaken breath,
Gaspingly struggles in the grip of death.

JULY : THE MONTH OF THE SUN

WITHIN the steep and steel-blue dome of sky
There is no stir nor murmur, swift or soft :
The sun bears steadily his torch aloft,
Striding up to the zenith, where on high
The sleepless God whose worshipper he is
Watches another day flash past in flame :
A day whose glory, worship, perfect fame,
Are but to breathe in an immobile bliss.

Now bees and brutes and men leave drink and
food ;
Sunk in a mighty reverie the earth,
Teeming with passionate joy, perfected pain,
Wings on its tireless path so oft pursued,
Through day and night, through death and life
and birth,
Through suns supreme and thunder-showers of
rain.

AUGUST: THE MONTH OF THE MOON

OVER the ashen hills, the sun-browned fields,
Over the windless peaks devoid of snow,
A vast and silent phantom glideth low,
Silvering the land and all the fruit she yields.

What dost thou seek, pale lonely wanderer,
Upon the earth while all men are asleep?
Perchance dost draw up treasures from the deep,
Or from some white road steal a wayfarer ;

The tinkle, too, of a hidden fountain's plash,
The feathery foliage of an ancient pine,
White garden walls with yawning gates are thine :
But the fierce blare of day, the sunset's clash
To thee are foreign, as on land and sea
Passion and sleep dost equally intertwine.

SEPTEMBER : THE HARVEST

SUMMER's scorching kiss
Has unclothed the land :
Here on every hand
Brown and bare she is.

Waters drowsily flow ;
Winds forget to sigh
'Gainst the gatherer's cry
As they homeward go.

Earth's unstinted gift,
Crimson, black and gold,
All that they can hold,
Now the bronze arms lift :

Crushing heaps of grape
Summer's drunken sun
Prisoned past escape,
Foaming in the tun.

OCTOBER : THE NORTH WIND'S GIFT

WIND, wind, southward scurrying
What in the north are you fleeing from?
'From the mountains shrouded in darkness
Round the summer's iron-barred tomb.'

Wind, wind, darkly whirling,
What is your purpose? Where do you go?
'To the valleys dim and sombre,
There to scatter, scatter the snow.'

Wind, wind, stony-hearted,
You take the green, what do you leave?
'Passionate tears for flowers departed :
Vain wrath, remorse, and icy grief.'

NOVEMBER :
THE BURNING OF THE BOUGHS

ALONG the mournful leafless plains
The wood-smoke drifts athwart the rains ;

For all the summer's growth is past,
And cut, and into one pile cast :

The leaves, the straw, the canes, the shoots,
The bark, willow and olive roots,

All sapless now, like spring's blue air,
And summer's fierce and calm despair !

We must repent such worthlessness,
If we would win the winter's peace ;

Give over the hours of love gone by,
The leafy hours, now dead and dry :

Be then our joy, our song, our lust,
Ashes to ashes, dust to dust.

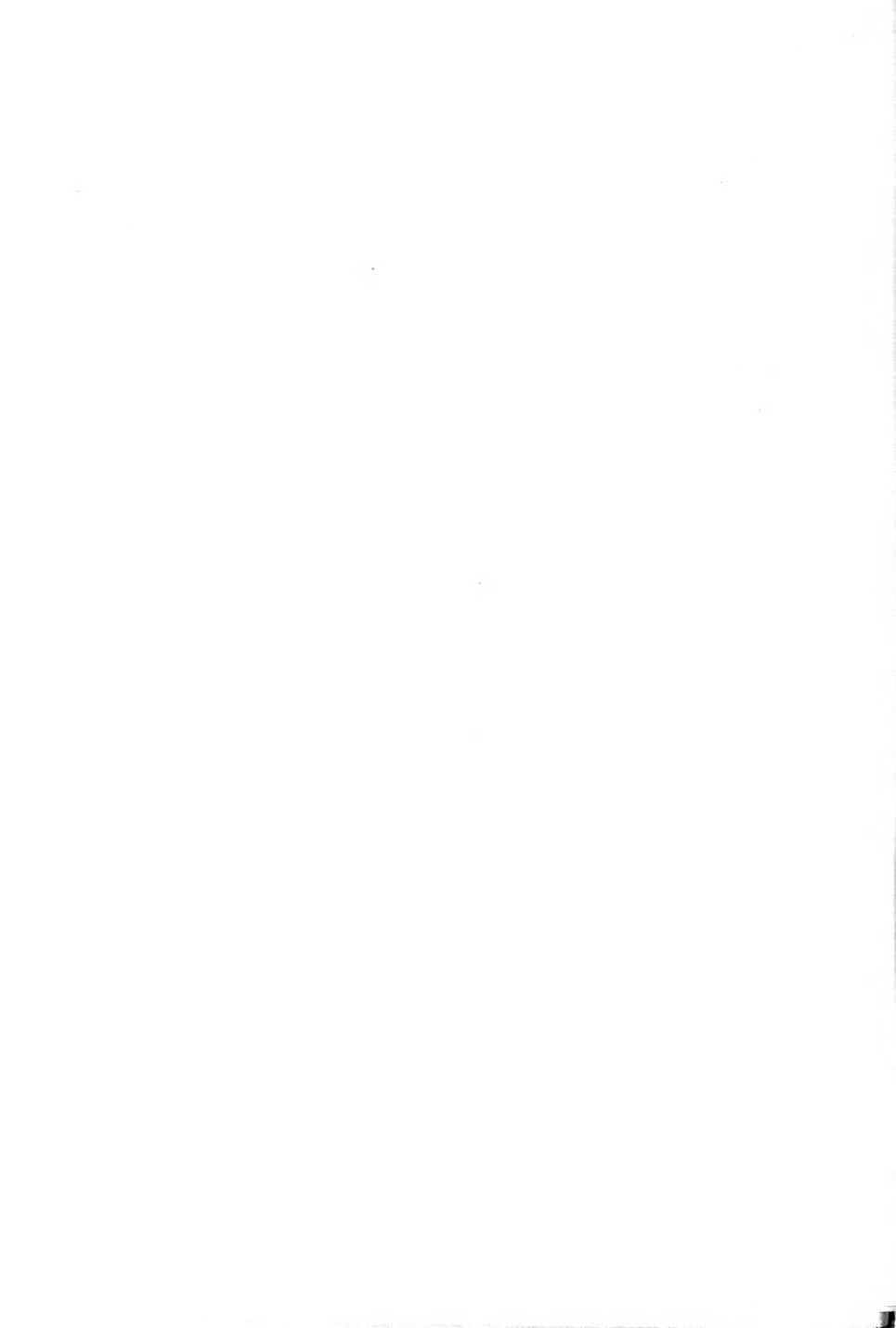
DECEMBER : THE HEARTH FESTIVAL

THERE are midwinter sunsets, fierce and red,
And there are early twilights and long nights,
And there is goodly talk about the fire.

There is endless rain blown up and down the vales,
There are storms and torrents ravaging on the hills,
And there is goodly talk about the fire.

There are the kettles singing on the sticks,
There are roast chestnuts and the ancient wine,
And there is goodly talk about the fire.

PART II
SICILIAN REEDS



SEA-SOUNDING BELLS

LEAPING forth from their steep battlemented nest
on the hillside,
Seaward the bells float, on strong reverberant pinions :
Lingering enmingled in silvery dreams of the olives ;
Rustling the yellow stalks of the grain, fluttering lightly the vine-leaves ;
Low-rolling over the hoarse uproar of the surf ;
Soaring over sails and cordage in great ships becalmed off shore ;
Groaning in deep narrow crannies of island crags ;
They pass, in long, low quivers of melodious laughter :
Till far on a sailless sea drifting and fading,
Or by swift eddies of warm breeze caught, jangled and broken,
Their sonorous tympani vanish beneath the wind's shrill violins.

A PANTHEIST'S WISH

WERE I a rock, a flower, a tree, a brook, a reed,
Were I the slightest quivering blade of grass,
Or the lone shepherd's flute-notes as they pass
Towards the sky, then that were bliss indeed :
Were I the filmy cloud overhead sailing
To sunburnt peaks and drowsy, dreamy plains ;
I would not care what fate for me remains,
Nor spend my idle hours in useless wailing.

Were I a cricket sun-intoxicated,
Or, best of everything upon the earth,
A bacchanal poppy blazing in the sun,
I would not care what early doom was fated,
But would rejoice with nature in new birth,
And every hour count life as fresh begun.

LINES WRITTEN AT TAORMINA,
SICILY

HERE on the dark rocks
Of the land's verge,
I hear the wind's shout,
The murmur of surge.

Like a rabble afar,
Its applauding cries,
Millions in number,
Confusedly rise.

So the myriad-voiced
Cold ancient one
Sends up his song
Of praise to the sun.

The winds above him
Stride and are free.
They pry in the rocks,
Where wallows the sea :

SICILIAN REEDS

Till into dark clefts
They suddenly fall,
And he seizes them swiftly :
While, over all,

Smilingly white
Over deep-blue shade,
The far snow-peak
Nods a drowsy head.

SONG OF THE SUMMER BREEZES

WE dance with pulsating feet
Through the wild wilderness.

We, the sons of delight,
Who know not any sorrow,
Who take no thought of the morrow,
Indifferent to day or night,
Warmed by the sun's caress,
Finding existence sweet.

We make our bacchanals
Wherever the dark grape is swaying
Heavy with juice, on the vine,
Or the shepherd's flute-note calls.
The sunlight, the joy of the ocean,
Weaves itself with our motion :
But the nymphs of the rocks, half divine,
Detain us, intoxicated.
—And we sleep until day is belated.

THE SECRET OF THE HILLS

THE hours that made up centuries are past,

Like old winds dancing down a bright sea-waste :
Our little hour of revel comes at last.

But lo, the hills all armoured in dark gold !

Still safely in dim treasuries they hold
Sunlight and silence, as in hours of old.

SUMMER SILENCE

THE cypress trees against the sky
Are funeral urns of tragedy ;
Old ashes rest within their covers,
Over them silent the swallow hovers.

The olive leaves against the sky
Are like men's dreams before they die :
Little grey birds in flocks a-winging
On noiseless wings : silent their singing.

The asphodel in stillness quivers,
Where over empty stony rivers
And bare heat-vales, and sailless seas,
Brood ruins on dead memories.

Amid them poppies on the ground
Like blood fresh-spilt from a death-wound,
Offer with fiery passion dumb
Their drowsy cups of opium.

Over dream-pale and death-red flowers,
On rock and olive, falls in showers
The plaintive cry of some wild bird
Which but makes silence the more heard.

THE BACCHANAL

THE waves run shouting down the beach, the sea
is full of light,
The wind is scattering flower-petals, petals red
and white,
The brown earth quivers in the sun. Be sober,
you who may :
But we with draughts of ruby wine make revelry
to-day !

'Tis red as leaping sunset, its heart is liquid
fire—
A hot kiss, and a sudden glance from eyes that
speak desire :
A quick embrace amid the rout that reels in
disarray—
All these are in that ruby wine that we swill down
to-day !

Now giddy onward whirls the dance, such frenzy
ne'er was seen :
The hollow click of castanets, the tinkling
tambourine,

The twittering flute, the gaudy scarves that flutter
bright and gay,
All these are here, and here is wine, the wine we
drink to-day !

The gods upon Olympus with ambrosia pelt the
sky ;
While tossed about our laughing throng the
orange-blossoms fly ;
And asphodels are flying 'mong the shades so pale
and grey,
For all have drunk the ruby wine, the wine we
drink to-day.

THE DEAD CITY

(Messina, 1908-1911)

VAST shattered heaps of stone
In giant pose are thrown :
Or stand, gaunt and alone,
 Above this realm of death.
They pierce on either hand
To where the sky is spanned
With flying rain-clouds fanned
 By sunset's kindling breath.

And that sky never weeps.
Over these twisted heaps
The stifling dust-cloud creeps
 With the sad wanderer home.
A city 'twas, whose walls
(Where now the silence falls)
Clashed with a million calls,
 Greater than Tyre or Rome.

Now 'mid this disarray—
Hid shamefully away
From the white blaze of day—
 A people skulk afar :

Each in some cavern hides
Through the long still night-tides ;
The day still them divides,
 They know not that they are.

Beneath are gloomy graves.
In noisome vaults or caves
Lie bodies, under waves
 Of rock reared high in pain :—
Less pain for those who strove
In vain, with hate or love,
Than that life cannot move,
 Can never strive again.

For nowhere now I see
Life's supreme cruelty :
But falls the dark sad sea
 Of death, indifferent,
On gardens growing wild,
And palaces up-piled,
And torturous slums defiled,
 And crazy tenement.

To who dares enter there,
A theatre, vast and bare,
Yawns blackly to the air
 With seats and stage complete.

SICILIAN REEDS

No paling footlights' spark
Gleams through the still cool dark ;
No applause now to mark,
 No stamping eager feet !

And here the glittering shrine,
House of the Powers divine,
Lifts high its tower-line,
 Its domes half fallen away.
Within, amid debris,
Marble and gold I see
Appeal in mockery
 To the dumb motionless day.

Such is your end at last !
Dreams beautiful and vast,
Dead since a dateless past,
 Dead 'neath your heaps of stone.
Beneath these slabs no ghost
Glides up, nor marching host,
To mourn and wail their lost ;
 For fear and hope are gone.

GIRGENTI

THE fairest city of all mortals stands,
Lifting its golden temples to the sun
In roofless splendour, o'er the valley lands
In which the waves of wind 'mid green wheat
run
Down to the dunes, and the white tideless sands,
Beyond which painted galleys plunge as one.

Brown height on height uprears sky-dwelling
shrines :
The dreamer there divines
Afar the ruddy sacrificial flame,
The blue smoke from each fane
Waving into the zenith, hazy-veiled,
And that low chant whereby the gods are hailed.

Afar they dwell, the lofty limitless gods :
To aspire to them a hope
Of lonely men in the shadow of those hills
Which gaze on fertile miles
Where men for ages live and die and grope
Beneath their frequent frowns and favouring nods.

Afar behind these motionless veils of grey,
They dance, perchance, in endless festivals
Through the skies' glittering halls !
Or gaze, with light untold,
Towards an age of gold :
Perchance they sleep, each on a separate star,
Perchance on earth they are :
I know not. If I did, would it heal care?

I only know earth bares her nakedness
Before the sun's great glass.
The land is ever silent, and the air
Is peace, and peace the shimmering sea doth bless.
Beautiful is the earth, fertile and bare ;
The flowers everywhere
Which, as in millions of ages unrevealed,
Dream even yet of gold and emerald.

THE FLOCKS OF PAN

WE are the great God's flocks
Browsing amid the rocks :
 Where olives, a straggling line,
 Wind upwards to his shrine.
There, set on a golden seat,
 Hairy Pan guards us well ;
The waves with their rippling wheat,
 The rocks with their asphodel.
 Pan ! Pan !

On the crags above deep river-valleys
We drowse in the sun, while the galleys
 Flash past in purple and gold
 To the blue sea below our fold.
The God, half asleep is he ;
 And of Syrinx, perhaps, is his dream :
 For the reeds by the bed of the stream
Murmur and sigh restlessly,
 ‘ Pan ! Pan ! ’

But now there 's a breath on the breeze ;

A whisper amid the trees :

And over a russet crag

A red face with horns and a rag

Of beard, leers down at us.

'Tis Pan, the horrible,

Goat-legged, amorous !

Flee over rock and dell !

Pan ! Pan !

PART III
ENGLAND



THE CRY OF NATURE

HEAR now great Nature cry

Gladly, exultantly :—

‘ Man dreams of mastery

Never his own.

Rather, my slave he is :

I grant him pain or bliss,

As I choose, stab or kiss,

Holding the throne.

‘ His thralldom is not o’er.

As in the years before,

Me yet he must adore

Ere aught he do.

I keep or break his state :

I yield unequal fate :

Pain, sorrow, shame and hate

I but renew.

‘ Fight me with tooth or glaive :

Conquer both wind and wave !

All things of mine shalt have :

But how couldst live,

Fool, if I gave them not?
What then would be thy lot?
On a drear desert spot
Well wouldst thou thrive!

‘What are thy ideas crude—
What, but the echoes rude
And false of the foolish mood
I put thee in?
What is thy freedom great?
Better a servile state
Than freedom won by weight
Of thine own sin.’

Hear now great Nature cry
Gladly, exultantly :—
‘Century on century
I keep thee still :
Till thou hast brought to waste
All that I gave, at last.
Then I slay, without haste :
Complete my will!’

LINES WRITTEN AT STONEHENGE

ACROSS the low-curved billows grey
That sweep in swell and hollow round
This summit, lights and shadows play
In gold and blue upon the ground.
Dark russet groves in the hollows are :
But else, the earth is free and bare.

A sound of far-off cattle-bells ;
A skylark's broken burst of song ;
A pearl-white cloud that slowly swells
To centaur-shape : and, far along,
The rustling of an idle breeze !
So has it been for centuries !

And lo ! this summit which no man
For ages has inhabited !—
And here the dark trilithons stand—
The relics of what Titans dead ?
No human hand could dare to raise
Such temples to the green God's praise.

WINDSWEPT PLANTS AT SEA

The ship glides steadily on,
 As over a sea of grass,
 Birds pass—and then, birds pass
 Horizons rise and die.
 The shadowy trail from the earth
 Lies sleeping under the sky
 To wait a coming voice
 To rise a working light.

Here ships like clouds of white,
 Their clouds like ships that rise
 And the great waves sing
 Song from sun-summer shore
 But here the light is
 They rest upon the floor
 For the great of nothing light
 They, it rises to more.

TO A SKYLARK

O THOU unwearied one, tread the dance of the sun,
On a height of great wonder and of wild delight
To the rhythm of the day and the mad wind's sway.

Not a thrush with his warning shall thy note ever
hush

With its ecstasy profound, rippling, bubbling
wells of sound :—

Silence now that meditation that he mutters from
his bush,

Like a Buddhist monk a-dreaming of Nirvana afar !
Let thy wings and thy feet and thy voice together
greet

The grassy plain's great bound, the skies' blue
profound,

That at its wooded edge weaves a vast circle round.
Like a rocket in its flight, a balloon, or a kite,
In the rhythm of thy voice now rejoice.

ON A HILLSIDE

ALONE upon a hill's dark brow
I lay. 'Twas afternoon, and now

I had walked wood and farmstead o'er,
Dusty and heartsick and footsore.

The bees boomed through the blossoming gorse
Heavily, dully, hot and hoarse,

And the skylarks' clear bell-notes rang
From far off faintly, as they sang :

The thunder-clouds rode from the sea
'Mid muttered tumult, solemnly ;

And the winds from the skylands brought
Over the illimitudes, a thought :—

A thought I could not understand,
That earth lay shadowed 'neath God's hand.

IN THE WOOD

IN the wood am I ;
 I, the most estranged
From Nature of her births :
My thoughts toward barren dearths
 Of aspiration changed,
And my life's ending nigh.

I am a stranger here,
I feel the selfsame fear
 Of ten thousand years ago :
When tribes went ill at ease
Among the sinister trees
 That seemed to watch and know.

I feel that old unrest,
'Spite a longing in my breast
 To be at one with them :
One-half rebellious is,
One-half would share the bliss
 Of every green-clad stem.

And yet, of every prize
That in earth's keeping lies,
 Give me a lonely spot :
Where the wind in the tree-top dies,
And the far-off bird-calls rise,
 And thought is not.

FULL MOON

FULL moon, and night's great hush
On grass and flower and bush :
The motionless calm of the trees
Standing in shadowy peace
Down the long road, far away
To the white borders of day.

Through a sparkling ocean of air
The moonlight is scattered, where
There is only smiling sleep,
And the stars that move on the deep.
But the flowers then, men say,
Meditate on the day.

SUN AFTER RAIN

AFTER the long rain
The sun sprang forth again,
The light that conquers pain.

A church-bell far away
Melodiously asway
Threw out a throbbing gay.

Like fountain-spray in air,
The light was shattered where
Before 'twas bleak and bare.

The whole sky shook with light :
The earth quivered with might :
And nowhere was there night.

HAZE ON THE HILLS

It is the thin haze-mist
Which, near or distant, clings
Upon the bare rough hills,
Half veiling shapes of things.

It makes the ranges seem
Like a great sea bronze-cast ;
It throws pale lights amid
Their roller-shadows vast.

Like a thin spray it is,
As it melts out here and there
To the sunlit windless air,
In the sky-realms of bliss.

Into those pale sky-realms
Half hid by grey, that fill
With shadowy light the sea
That, mystically, is still.

DEATH OF THE SUMMER, 1912

SHE lieth dead, her dark hair all astream,
A silver shape wrapt in soft folds of rain.
And from her grey eyes faded is the dream
Of that dim peace which asks not joy or pain.

EPITAPH ON THE SUMMER OF 1912 51

EPITAPH ON THE SUMMER OF 1912

STRAYED far from out her father Sun's domain,
Lifelong she wept ; but all her tears were vain.
Her broken-hearted mother Earth now rears
This stone to her, and wets it with her tears.

THE SUMMONS OF AUTUMN

MY boyhood passed as a storm of spring :
My youth as a vague, calm summer day :
But ended now is all my play,
For autumn's frost has gripped my soul,
And my pulses leap beneath its sting.
Pinnacles of incomplete rhyme
I will rear up to catch the sun,
Higher than any man has done.
And I will see broad glinting gleams
Of the infinite gold that far-up streams,
Beyond dark clouds of space and time.

Pale amber dawn of springtime is long since left
behind me,
And summer's noontide rose has scattered its
petals now,
And the clarions of the autumn solemn and
sonorous wind me :
'Forth, go forth with the vine upon thy brow,
Forth to the fluttering pennons of the forest red
with pain ;
Forth, to the fury of the rain !'

A SONG OF AUTUMN

I

THE world's a great pain-maddened tragic dance,
Wherein grey satyrs, withered mænads prance :
So do not yield to nobler things your soul,
But drain the grape lees lurking in the bowl.
Indifferent to to-day's, to-morrow's fate,
Now let the frost upon the wine-cup wait :
And waste 'mid autumn's downward-shuddering
 leaves,
The last of summer's heavy harvest sheaves.
The cups to their old spell our hearts have strung,
Unreversed wrinkles look now almost young ;
Let us to our last bacchanal advance :
The world's a great pain-maddened tragic dance !

II

The leaves gyrate in fury round and round ;
They harshly rattle with a dry thin sound.
'Tis like cracked evil laughter, shrill as sin,
Of chattering witches at the devil's inn.

These are my songless days, not fled away
But blown about me in the death of day :
Blown by the wind that chills my lagging feet,
And stings my face with frozen tears of sleet.

Ironically old memories circling whirl
About my brain like this brown withered swirl ;
No more my sun burns on the peaks of gold,
Dark rooms and firelight loves the heart that 's old :

Let loose upon the land the grey sharp blast,
And blow my leaves away from first to last !
For they are dead, and I am dead as well—
A dry leaf whirled about a sunless hell.

The leaves gyrate in fury round and round ;
They harshly rattle with a dry thin sound.

THE WIND'S BOOTY

AUTUMN'S heavy galleon-hosts

Rock and reel on the stormy main
Of the chilly sky. By rocky coasts

They hurl bombardments of dark rain :
The wind, a swaggering roisterer,
On their flank has roused a stir.

Through their decks in a cataract

Rush his bold blaspheming tones :
Wealth of all the Indies sacked,

Weight of golden leaves at once,
Hurriedly he strips away
In his desperate foray.

Some he bears, the buccaneer,

To a favoured cranny hid
Chartless, rocky shoals amid,

Where he buries them each year.
But the most away he flings
As he staggers on and sings.

Far behind him the cloud's swift
Men-o'-war and brigantines
On the skyline slowly lift
Ponderous sail, in long dark lines :
And from out their straining sides
Leaps the grey smoke of broadsides.

SUMMER'S SOUVENIR

THE winter wind
 Wearily sighs
Through heavy oak boughs,
 Where the dead leaf dies.

Across the dull sky
 The dark clouds go ;
Like withered witches
 They brew the snow.

On the walls of my heart
 Hangs summer's face :
An old portrait
 With a shy, wild grace.

It is curtain-covered
 And hidden away,
And I watch it moulder
 Day after day.

A BALLAD OF DEAD AUTUMNS

I sit and watch the dark glow of the fruit,
And drowsily mark the dropping of the leaves ;
And now and then I idly touch a lute
Half strung, whose music, 'gainst the wind
that grieves,
Is like the sob of some poor penitent
In a cathedral, 'gainst the organ tones
Of some vast chant of wrath and stormy moans :
Lost soon, like to that summer which is spent,
And gone, as all the rest must go, I fear ;—
For flowers fade and fruit is rotten soon.—
Henceforth I care not for that coming year !
For I am weary of autumns past and gone.

For what then, in this sunlight pale and late
And hazy, do I lazily singing wait ?
I wait to see the birds in dark clouds fly,
The fruits fall and the latest flowers die ;
To taste the bitter berries of the wood,
Shining and hard, like frozen drops of blood ;

To smell the dark-blue acrid incense-drift
Of smouldering leaves, afloat in every rift ;
To hear, amid the dry leaves on the ground,
The wind that scurries with a burrowing sound ;
To feel the wrinkled frost, with teeth sharp-set,
Freezing those pools of tears which linger yet
Within my heart, where the trees, gaunt and
 greyed,
Repeat their weary, endless colonnade
Towards the horizon, red with setting sun—
The setting sun of autumns past and gone.

VOICES ON THE WIND

WIND and the whirling of white mists

Through the desolate night.

And there are voices on the wind :

Roaring horns, hoarse cries of battle !

The dark wind,

Endlessly whirling the white mists.

The pale mists

Wavering, unsteady, break before dawn :

They hurriedly vanish.

The low talk, the sombre yells of despair,

These are lost on the long wind :

But the jarring thunder of sea-chariots racing

Shoreward, yet holds my soul and keeps it from
gaining sleep.

MIDWINTER SUNSET

THE clouds blown together, like ragged whorls of
smoke,
Stretch long and twisted fingers up in the west :
And in their grip hangs weltering, half extin-
guished,
 The ruby of the sun.

The wind like a cripple rolls over dark purple
moors ;
And in the hollows the old bare beeches sing
A ballad of winter, while in their dry, stirring
leaves
A frightened squirrel scurries off in dismay.

NATURE'S DEATH

I STAND where beats the sea
Tireless, again and again :
'Tis crying tragically
Its old mysterious pain.
Beat by the shattered spray,
Stunned by the endless roar,
I watch the storm-clouds grey
That trail upon the shore.

Black riven crags of rock
Repel each wave's mad spring :
Great Nature, shock on shock,
Rages in suffering.
Man dreams to tame or slay
Her mad unbounded might :
One little hour of day
Is his, ere falls the night.

Weaving rebellious hymns
Of hopeless blasphemy,
Great Nature too hath dreams,
God's power to defy.

In vain her storms may screech,
In vain her winds may fight,
Their echoes cannot reach
Into the void of night.

The only cure is death.
And as I watch this sea,
I know how soon its breath
Spent and forgot must be :
The end of all at last
No eye may mark, or hand ;
A salt and glittering waste,
A skull upon the sand.

PART IV

ITALY—BAVARIA—SWITZERLAND
PROVENCE—AMERICA

VENICE

I HAVE seen Venice old and grey with years
Losing her faded gewgaws one by one.
Nothing more sad than this to me appears
Betwixt the morning and the evening sun.

It seemed to me my heart enrobed with tears
Was ceasing to long for all things under the
sun :
When nothing now the heart of Venice hears
But one great stir and frenzy to have done !

If all the things we once so loved in life
Seem now but trash to be swept into the sea :
Let Death, that pallid ennui, free from strife,
In taking Venice not pass over me !

O life of commonplace vast joys and tears,
O city whose proud dream of life is done,
Let the snow fall like ashes through the years,
For these have vanished, leaving me alone.

THE VOICE IN THE PINES

It is evening, and I rest beneath the pines.
Through their meshes a star in the grey-blue sky
Twinkles : the saffron robes of departing day
Are trailed down the western skies in melancholy
guise :

A voice is singing to me over and over again :—
' My garments are woven of the dark-green fronds
of the pine ;

I am brief trembling joy and sorrow frail and
forlorn.

I shake about me the mystery of my hair,
Fragrant with shadowy sighs and rustling with
myriads of tears.'

THE LURE OF EVENING

THE pale sun strikes a last sad glimmer of gold
From the worn and decrepit sides of crumbling
palaces,
Flaunting their shameless pride of slatternliness,
Frowning in monomaniac obsessions of the past.
Yet even after their walls have drunken the latest
sorrows,
Have swallowed the final glow of impurity, poverty,
lust,
And relapsed into the dumb melancholy of senility,
A brass laugh rings in the silence :—
There is a gleam of eyes, a rustle of skirts, a flirt
of fans.
After *us*, let there come exhaustion, madness, and
death.

ROME

THY frowning walls are stained with blood :
Thy palaces are yellow with lust :
Thy earth is but the ages' dust.
And yet o'er all these, Nature wild
Smiles like an untaught wondrous child.

I see thee in those ages red
When thy forum grows stripped and dead.
A temple empty at midday :
Bronze portals, columns wrenched away ;
Beneath in shadow, nothing loth,
Snores a drunken Ostrogoth.
Through Colosseum arches grim
Roll the sad echoes of a hymn
From a basilica built new,
Where gold mosaics gleam on blue.

And after this, thy second death.
When the fierce sirocco breath
Of the Renaissance flickers down,
And there is left over the town
A funeral autumn, purple-brown,

The eighteenth century. Palaces red
Glower fanatically, crumble dead ;
Weeds and dust cover the street ;
Arid fountains cease to beat ;
"Twixt dome and obelisk lines stretch out ;
Fluttering from them a coloured clout ;
A dirty hovel clings beside
A vast triumphal arch's pride :
On a Corinthian capital
A beggar pipes a pastoral.

Such, O Rome, are my strange dreams
That I dream when I walk in thee :
And yet I *see* thee differently :
Thou that wast once a world, and now no more a
home
For what thou wert ! Art sacked anew, O Rome !

O deathless city set in a sunny waste
Which has been dead—how many ages past ?
Why dreaming of thee, do I dream ever of
death ?
But such a question is but a waste of breath.
Thou hast no answer. Grant, O smiling Despair,
Dreams born of that sleep which is silent to joy
and care.

CYPRESSES

CYPRESSES motionless, double-rank arrayed,
Knights clad in tarnished bronze and silver
mail :

Funereal plumes nod on each towering head,
Fluting, the breezes low and solemn wail.

Tunes tinged with delicate, fastidious old romance,
Elegies of pride, of passion-crimson lust,
Whispers of gallantry and ancient dalliance,
Quiver now amid them, shaking out their dust.

Weedy dim pathways wind amid their stems,
Leading to pleasure-courts of long and lazy
hours,
Where from old fountains, crowned with diadems,
Into green basins languid water pours.

Here are carven trophies, antique helms and spears,
Like to these cypresses in a long line cast.
Masks too, grotesque with rage or twisted leers,
Mock with their hollow mouths the splendour
of the past.

Winds from the bare brown hazy hills awake
And, half laughing, scratch the heads of these
old trees.
Solemn as bearded gods, the sunburnt summits
shake,
Counselling age and endless rest and peace.

VALLEY AND PEAK

IN the valleys there is balm :
And yet the valleys seem
To me devoid of calm.
I am burdened with tragic dream.

But when twilight quietly knocks
At the door of my soul, then O
To fly to the icy rocks,
And the eternal snow !

GOLDEN LEAVES

THE dead leaves drift on the walks ;
The dead leaves litter the pond ;
They float down like mad butterflies,
Golden hordes to the southward bound.

On the trees in gold clusters they hang :
On the turf in gold carpets they rest.
The gold of the year swept away
Into pawnbroker Time's old chest.

THE VOICE OF THE TORRENT

It is the voice of the torrent that between its iron-
black crags
Rends its own beauty asunder, to innumerable
splinters and jags,
Lacing itself with white scars of foam in its mad-
ness to reach its rest.
It is the voice of the chasm :—‘ O Sun, be thou
ever blest,
That drew me up and in lightning-sent vapours
new-fashioned me ;
That hurried me on in black hordes from the lip of
thy sea
In a myriad self-destructive migrations towards
the peak afar,
That hurled me to darkness upon a frozen scour
In thy superb everlasting death-struggle with
Death ;
That receivest now my hoarse monotonous breath,
O Baal, and the smoke and the blown spray of
sacrifice !
Take all of these which are thine where the black
pines rise,
As thou tak’st in the South that life which thou
promisest me,
That peace of thy sultry passionate summer sea.’

ALPINE VIOLETS

(Imitated from Du Bellay)

You tiny flames of blue,
Whose naïve barbaric hue
 On grey rock-slope,
Seem like the sky let through
A painted window new,
 Grant me your hope !

I weave thin coronets,
Slim madrigalettes,
 Loose coronals of rhyme,
For you, whose blossoming
Turns summer into spring,
 Defeating Time.

Where 'gainst the frozen snows,
Rosy blue, each one glows
 Amid sparse grass :
Like young girls with tossed hair
Ring-dancing ; O, from there
 I would not pass !

VOICES

THE voices of the grass are harsh and shrill :
Cold and flute-like are the voices on the hill.
A bodiless sighing is the voice amid the boughs :
Clamorous are the voices where the torrent flows.
A tapping and a clapping are the voices of the
creek :
And an empty silence is the voice upon the peak.

THE HOME OF MEMORY

MEMORY is a shape that dwells
Between the leaves of certain trees,
That, slightly shifted by the breeze,
Let in long slanting planes of light.
Or she cries in the ever-white
Robe of the waterfall which moves
From the chasm to the groves,
Or she shines in the stars at night.

Often, too, with a touch of pain,
She moans amid loose-ravelled rain
Entangled, raking the pine-beam roof
Of a lone cabin high and aloof ;
Or rapidly she climbs the peaks
Where the sun in glory seeks
The vast wastes of untrodden snow.—
There Memory doth naked go.

Memory is alone the child
Of solitude and the dark wild :
Green or grey or white she moves,
And stays not, even for those she loves.

But in the city, where the glare
And steam of life infects the air,
Pain has conquered Memory :
Man's desire is to cease to be.

THE WOMAN OF THE MOUNTAINS

FROM a height on the sunlit mountains
I have looked afar,
And I have seen that the ranges
But one vast woman are.

In nudity tremendous,
Sleeping as if long dead,
Her body, white as marble,
Rests on its dark-green bed—

A Titaness left slumbering
Long since her earthly day ;
Her grim, bronze-muscled kinsmen
Are utterly swept away.

Smooth glaciers form her shining flanks,
Dark peaks her tangled hair,
And rose-tipped snowy summits
Are her breasts, which are still and bare.

Sometimes the sky weaves over her
A robe of cloud in shame,
Down summer and winter drifting
It goes : she rests the same.

Beneath her superb chasteness
Forces wait to be called to birth :
Forces of iron and lightning
That yet shall sway the earth.

For an infinite eternity
My soul can wait on the peak,
Weaving wild songs of slumber
Till she wakens : she I seek.

PROVENCE

BLANCHED castles crumbling on dark-red rocks :
Desolation under bronze skies :
Fever's mad monotonies :
Wine of life that burns the throat.

Long ago there were fountains here,
Shivering and shuddering with dark-green
waves.
And colonnades, and cool arcades,
And shadowy lakes in the long ago.

But the sun has baked the roof,
And the wind has eaten thereof :
Time has undone the woof,
And Death has danced on love !

Now all is but a monotonous song
Of memory and ennui,
A dry and dancing melody
Which the wind whistles all day long.

SONG OF THE SUN-INTOXICATED

THEE, Nature, do I drink
As of some stolen wine.
From the risk I do not shrink :
Let the punishment be mine !

O tigress, if you will,
Destroy my being quite,
But let the sunlight fill
My veins ere falls the night.

And, would you see me happy,
Then crush within my mouth
Your grey snows of the Northland,
And your red grapes of the South !

MIDSUMMER

THE waves shake the long wet beach,
Crashing in thunderous monotone :
The dazzling sails far out of reach
Are tossed about and blown.

The sun, like a million hammer-falls,
Bangs on the anvil of my brain ;
Daggers of pain at the eyeballs
Stab, again and again :

And all is brutal joy, despite
The poison and sweat on which I sup
When the black sword of the night
Shears off the sun, and the blood spouts up.

NIGHT IN THE WILDERNESS

NIGHT, and wilderness everywhere !
A wilderness that shares my care :
For the wind in the weary pine tree wakes,
In its feather bed it tosses and shakes.
One star like a taper at the head
Gleams low, unflickeringly, and red :
Death watches the patient, half-way dead.

As for me, passion has drained me dry :
Black, bitter dregs in my heart now lie,
And the awful thirst of fierce despair
I cannot shake off anywhere !
'O let dawn come or let me die !'
I groan : and is there no reply ?

A cloud rolls over the single star :
Blackness—void—silence—near and far. . . .

PART V
TWO DAYS AT VERSAILLES



19th MAY 1912

I. THE POPPY SONG

IN the grass that is scorched by the sun
The poppy blossoms, one by one ;
 And its wonderful tragic singing
Flames to a lonely crimson tone.

‘ Around me plays the southern breeze :
And I see, through the far blue trees,
 The far facades of palaces,
And gaunt terraces, ill at ease.

‘ Pan is stone, and the dryads sleep.
And they never hear the tears I weep
 As I watch the far-off shadows
While from tree to tree they creep.

‘ Summers forgotten are as this is.
There is one word for woe and bliss :
 Better to sleep and to lie forgetful
On the gold dust of princesses !

' I am summer's earliest fruit :
Amid the seeded grass I shoot.
I am summer's earliest sorrow :
And sleep has drugged my pain at the root.

' Far and far darts the silent swallow
Into the weft of the skies' pale haze.
I burn with a dream I cannot follow,
Time is hollow and death is hollow.

' Far away the breezes thunder
Through the green surf of the ancient elms.
I cannot rise, I am sucked under,
Time is wonder and death is wonder.

' Time can heal all right and wrong.
Time is a sudden burst of song
From a wild bird down distant woodlands,
Ever flitting, nor staying long.'

II. THE SADNESS OF SUMMER

To my soul which is as drunken
 With summer's anguish of silent leaves,
Dead infantas go trailing by,
 And the swallow is one that grieves
For a past, which the trees have not forgotten,
For they suck in its strength with their leaves dead
 and rotten.

O the long, long silent sadness
 Of summer which weeps not for evermore !
Like a boat adrift on the dark sea's gladness
 The sunlight seeks in vain a shore :
And back through the thin dry sky it must pass,
From the drooping trees and the withered grass.

Brood in unechoing branches, woe :
 But let no words mark what must be.
Wait till the fading yet darkening glow
 Of the sun gone down in the west you see :
Then in tearless sobs let your grief pass away
In the arms of old twilight, deaf and grey.

III. TO A ROSE OF THE TRIANON

TELL me, O exquisite rose that abidest
Here, 'mid the relics of a beauty faded,
From what dust hast thou gathered that proud
 essence
Of perfume and colour that thou giv'st to the
world?
Thou that hast sucked the heat of the rain-washed
 marbles,
Tremulously flushing with crimson in the sunlight,
Careless thou bloomest, rose of love unaltered,
Though all men's hate and pride about thee fall in
 ruin—
As though all the ages were not—as though the
world were made new.

IV. BY THE FOUNTAIN

I LAY beside a fountain, listening in the shadow
To a murmur of far-off voices that faded and
then restirred :

And it seemed to me that a great song of passion
and praise they were making,

Afar where I could scarce hear them, for the
wind tossed their singing away.

Around me were lichen'd benches covered with
flower-petals ;

Fallen and withering petals showered from
stooping trees,

Trailing green locks in the pool, as they gazed at
their reflections,

Through the thick tangles of their tousled hair.

And there were pedestals, but lacking statues ;

And there were naiads moulded in greenish
bronze :

I lay beside the fountain and I tossed up flower-
petals

Into the air, but marked not the spot whereon
they fell :

Till the fountain tossed up too its filmy veil of
water,

That shook the air and shattered the murmurs
beyond the leaves.

V. VOICES IN THE WOOD

VOICES heard afar in the wood
Hollowly echo into my ear ;
Voices that seek for something lost,
Voices that ask but obtain no reply.
'Have I lost or gained? Did I live or die?'
Such is the burden they seem to bear.
But time is a wild bee buzzing by,
And deaf to the voices in the air.

VI. THE FOUNTAINS OF SUNSET

IN gold columns the fountains mount to the air,
Drifting westward, like a swarm of golden bees,
In undulant waves, like a gold burden of hair.

They shoot up above the green grottoes, the day
being done,
And the light retreating from under the shadowy
trees ;
Their noise is of seven harp-players playing as one :

And the sun-motes around, like a swarm of golden
bees,
Lazily swim in the circling meshes thereof ;
Dancing and drifting and lingering, seeking a
breeze.

The sun himself drew up that water which fills
your love ;
And soon as his gold-sparkling chariot hurries
away,
You shall flutter your plumage, O fountains, like a
trapped dove.

Over the velvety fingers of night, there shall flow
your grey spray.

VII. MIDSUMMER TWILIGHT

Now softly touch theorbos old and shrill,
And let the hautboys sob for passing eves
Of white midsummer, since my spirit grieves
That the great bowl of sky which the light fills
Should slowly overflow on ripened sheaves,
Vibrating slackly like the arms of mills
Weary of waltzing with the wind that thrills
The great green world, the rivers, and the leaves.

O let the music mark the day's slow passing
To those dim vaults where rest all peaceful days,
Humbly awaiting the horn that shall them raise. . .
Meanwhile the clouds' giant-built towers are
massing
Westward like pyres along the sun's last streams ;
To ashes they drop, in the cold sea of dreams.

21st OCTOBER 1912

I. EPILOGUE TO THE POPPY SONG

THE poppy has gone out of the grass,
Summer's as if it never was.

And the ranked trees, like sombre torches,
Shake a dry rain of leaves on the grass.

Bowed statues mourn or shrink in fear :
The long horizons draw more near,

Under the trailing loose grey cloud-racks
That move over acres sere.

Nature wakes from her summer dream,
Only the dark yews changeless seem ;

Over grey terraces unechoing
Thus they sing their tragic dream :—

'The wind in the treetop makes a dry sound,
The dead leaf rattles along the ground.

And sliding down the broad grey stairways,
It rolls around, and then around—

'The wind blows northward gusts of rain.
Solitude, a dim shape of pain,

Scatters the pale and ashy sunlight
Amid the pale and ashy rain.

‘ The earth is golden, blue, and brown,
The leaves slip nonchalantly down,
Past pompous and empty palace-fronts
That have forgotten their renown.

‘ Beauty is a white shape of stone
In an old garden left alone,
Under her feet lies the husk of the poppy,
And the leaves are falling, one by one.

‘ But the rain has blackened her now,
And the green moss grows on her brow,
And her shattered arms she holds up
In a great vague gesture of tragic woe.

‘ Beauty is but a transient death.
She is frozen by the chill breath
Of the wind, that spatters the sparse raindrops
Upon the beautiful golden leaf.

‘ Ennui is the end of all :
Beauty falls as the last leaves fall.
We shall be weary but unsleeping
When white snows drift and dark winds call.’

II. AUTUMN ELEGY

THERE was music in my heart
Till the wind began to rouse
In the autumnal boughs
That hung over the house ;
There was music in my heart,
Song to my lips would often come :
But I listened to the wind.
'Tis the wind has made me dumb.

There was colour in my heart
Till the rain shook out her pall—
Folds of grey that fell on all
The gardens, with their statues tall ;
There was colour in my heart,
But the rose burst in the rain,
And the flame to embers sank :
Colour never came again.

There was dancing in my heart,
Revelry the hours made ;
In gold sunlight, in green shade,
How they chattered, laughed, and played !
There was dancing in my heart :
There they whirled until the last.
They are stiff and smiling now,
And the dead leaves hide them fast.

III. TO A ROSE OF THE AUTUMN

LATE rose that lingerest strangely in old gardens,
Amid the sombre splendours of the autumn,
What dost thou here, flushed crimson mouth of
passion?
The laughter has fled: the dancers have de-
parted;
There are no breezes to kiss thee; here dost solicit
in vain
Love by the wind-ruffled pools, where no flung
jets from the fountains
Aspire to the pale, cool-mottled, windy, and chilly
sky.
Of blossoms of love art the last: see, the mad
dead leaves dance about thee!
Soon thy translucent ruby vase shall be swayed,
cracked, and shattered:
And thy petals shall drift over the fresh-fallen
snow.

IV. BY THE FOUNTAIN

I too in Arcadia was—how many months ago?
 Time has woven new mystery, beauty is faded
 now ;

The hours like the jets of fountains upwards and
 outwards flow.

Then all the birds sang daylong, making a merry
 carouse ;

Now a late bird cries plaintively from sighing and
 sobbing boughs.

Then the fountain sparkled with jewels : now no
 more the water flows.

Then I was young : there was dancing and sing-
 ing, too, in my heart.

Now I am old and silent : I voyage alone and
 apart,

Towards midwinter sunset, through chill dead
 leaves of art.

My song is as vain as the wind is : but Nature,
 for my sake,

Will bury me deep in the frozen earth, where I
 may never wake

By unfinished marble fountains that Time has
 forgotten to take.

V. VOICES OF AUTUMN

THE rain spattered the pond,
The wind shook at the trees :
But late, in the hours beyond,
The sun came, bringing peace.

Peace to the sodden walks,
Peace to the shivering trees,
Peace to the withered stalks ;
Everywhere there was peace.

VI. AUTUMN EVENING

It is the melancholy evening light,
Which slowly spills over dark russet trees
That languidly lift their heavy leaves to the
breeze
And let them fall, ere downward whirls the night.

It is the melancholy of my heart :
Frozen to marble shapes half-glimpsed between
A fountain's exquisite ecstacy of green,
On terraces of trim rococo art.

It is the melancholy of the earth :
The bleak north wind that shatters the golden
boughs,
And brings upon the harvest frosty dearth,
And leaves a ruin of the lofty house.

VII. FAREWELL TO VERSAILLES

FAREWELL, O dim horizons of the past,
Multitudinous mirages that could not last !
You were as white swans sailing through
A basin's cool profound of blue,
Or towers of white cloud blotted out
Swiftly, by a storm rack's rout.
Farewell, pursued but flying hours :
I shall dream to-night beneath snow or flowers.

Farewell, futility ! I may not tell
To thee, alas ! my last farewell :
Farewell, O alleys infinite,
That drew outward this my sight.
Farewell, chill winter winds that range,
Sun-drunken summers, green and strange ;
Farewell, you scarlet or opal hours :
I shall dream to-night beneath snow or flowers.

EPILOGUE TO
'TWO DAYS AT VERSAILLES'

My heart is like some sad capricious king
Set in the midst of a revolted state,
Who sees not where to turn, nor what may bring
The morrow's news to fix uncertain fate.
Pricked by suspense with maddening gadfly-sting,
He sees his gardens growing desolate
'Neath autumn's chilly touch, which swift can
bring
Blood-lustre to the lips of leaves that late
Hung in green wreaths, 'mid bracts of blossoming.
He sees them : yet he still must hesitate
Until his people, drunken with fury, spring
Towards the throne : he hears their last 'too
late,'
And nevermore those gardens know that king.

Louis XVI. left Versailles for the last time on October 6, 1789.

EPILOGUE TO
'THE BOOK OF NATURE'

I SANG thee passionately many and many days,
From where the winter, casting his grey shroud,
Stepped forth in the shrill and maddening dance of
the spring,
Through the summer's stately tragical pomp-
parade,
To the autumn's smouldering waltz of colour
whirled
In melancholy fashion, through the air :
I sang thee until winter came again
With slow, restrained, stern, fixed, and measured
steps
Broken by bursts of despair. Yet still I sang :
And carried my love of thee to many lands.
Peak, vineyard, rock-bound northern coast, broad
beach
Streaming in sunlight ; barren and arid waste,
Classical sea in moonlight tossed, have hearkened
To my wild chanting ; yet they naught replied

Nor offered thanks : for they knew, even as I,
Their being, their sun, their darkness, was the
reward.

And now, for the last time, I look on that face
From which I have gathered many marvellous
dreams,

Before which dreams are dreams and nothing
more.

Reality of all ! I cannot praise ;

But I can obey thy word now plainly spoken :—

'Thou who from man's sick frailty towards me
turned

And gat from me stern strength : see, thou art
man !

Turn back and sing to my receiving ears

The folly of thy fellows, sky-sublime ;

Their wisdom, which is basest folly : these

Would I hear from thy lips, for thou art man ;

Unchangeably created so, and ruled :

If for no other purpose, then, that I

May smile at thee, seeing thee fool complete,

Perfect in every detail, highest art

Of vanity, before which naught is vain.'

December 31, 1912.

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at the Edinburgh University Press

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